



STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS MODERATION THROUGH COMMUNITY SERVICE IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS

Ahmad Muda Harahap¹, Pitriani Ritonga², Raja Ritonga³

¹ Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tapanuli (STAITA) Padangsidempuan, Indonesia

² Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tapanuli (STAITA) Padangsidempuan, Indonesia

³ Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri Mandailing Natal, Indonesia

Article History:

Received : January 2026

Accepted : February 2026

Published : April 2026

Corresponding Author:

Name: Ahmad Muda Harahap

Email: ahmadmuda@staitapanuli.ac.id

Abstract: Religious moderation has become a crucial issue in maintaining social harmony within diverse societies, particularly in the context of Islamic education. This study aims to examine the implementation of religious moderation values through community service activities in Islamic boarding schools. The program was conducted in Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor Manunggang Julu and Pondok Pesantren Darul Istiqomah Huta Padang, involving students as primary participants. A participatory approach was employed through mentoring, training, and habituation activities integrated into daily boarding school life. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation during the implementation of the program. This approach emphasizes experiential learning as an effective method for internalizing values in educational settings. The results indicate that students experienced significant improvement in understanding and practicing religious moderation values, particularly in terms of tolerance, balance, and inclusive social interaction. The structured programs combined with continuous habituation contributed to the development of moderate and socially responsive attitudes among students. This study concludes that community service-based approaches are effective in strengthening religious moderation in Islamic boarding schools. The findings provide practical implications for developing sustainable, context-based strategies to promote social cohesion and inclusive religious understanding.

Keywords: religious moderation, community service, Islamic boarding schools, pesantren, social harmony

Please cite this article as:

Harahap, A. M., Ritonga, P., & Ritonga, R. (2026). Strengthening religious moderation through community service in Islamic boarding schools. *Sahata: Jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat*, 1(1), 23–42.

INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation has become an increasingly significant issue in contemporary societies, particularly in countries characterized by cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. In pluralistic contexts such as Indonesia, differences in

beliefs and practices are inevitable and can potentially lead to misunderstanding, social tension, and even conflict if not managed appropriately. Therefore, the promotion of balanced, inclusive, and tolerant religious understanding is essential for maintaining social harmony and strengthening national integration. This issue is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where diversity is a defining characteristic of the nation and requires continuous efforts to sustain unity within diversity (Azra, 2019; Latif, 2020).

In recent years, the rise of religious intolerance, radicalism, and exclusivism has posed serious challenges to social cohesion. Various studies have shown that rigid interpretations of religious teachings can lead to attitudes that are less accommodating toward differences, thereby increasing the risk of social fragmentation (Amin, 2022; Ismail, 2020). These developments highlight the urgent need for strengthening religious moderation through systematic and sustainable approaches, particularly within educational institutions. Education plays a strategic role not only in transmitting knowledge but also in shaping values, attitudes, and social behavior among learners (Banks, 2015).

Religious moderation, often associated with the Islamic concept of *wasatiyyah*, emphasizes balance (*tawazun*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), and justice (*i'tidal*) as core principles in religious understanding and practice. These values encourage individuals to adopt a middle path, avoiding both extreme rigidity and excessive liberalism. In the context of education, the internalization of these values is essential for developing individuals who are capable of engaging constructively with diversity while maintaining their religious identity (Hidayat & Nafis, 2021).

Islamic educational institutions, particularly Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), have a significant role in fostering religious moderation. As institutions that integrate religious instruction with daily life practices, *pesantren* provide a unique environment where values can be internalized through continuous experience. Students are not only taught religious concepts but are also engaged in structured routines and social interactions that reinforce these values in their everyday lives (Arifin, 2021).

However, despite their potential, many educational approaches in *pesantren* still emphasize cognitive understanding rather than practical application. Students may understand the concept of moderation theoretically, but they do not always demonstrate it in their behavior. This gap between knowledge and practice indicates the need for more effective approaches that integrate experiential learning and value internalization into the educational process (Fahham, 2020).

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) represent one of the most influential forms of Islamic education in Indonesia, functioning not only as centers of religious learning but also as institutions for character formation and social development. The distinctive feature of *pesantren* lies in their holistic educational system, where students live within the institution and engage in continuous religious, academic, and social activities. This integration of learning and daily life creates a conducive environment for the internalization of values, as students are consistently exposed to structured routines, role models, and communal interaction (Arifin, 2021; Zuhdi, 2018).

Within this environment, the internalization of religious moderation values requires approaches that go beyond conventional classroom instruction. While theoretical teaching provides an important foundation, it is often insufficient to produce lasting behavioral change. Students need to experience and practice moderation values in real-life situations in order to internalize them effectively. This highlights the importance of experiential learning, which emphasizes learning through direct experience, reflection, and active participation (Kolb, 1984).

Community service programs offer a practical and relevant approach to implementing experiential learning in Islamic educational settings. Through community service activities, students are directly involved in social interaction, problem-solving, and collaborative engagement with others. These experiences provide opportunities for students to practice moderation values such as tolerance, empathy, and inclusivity in real-life contexts. In this sense, community service functions as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical application, enabling students to translate abstract concepts into concrete behavior (Banks, 2015; Yusuf, 2021).

Furthermore, community service programs are closely related to the concept of value internalization, which involves the transformation of external values into internal beliefs that guide behavior. This process requires continuous practice, reinforcement, and reflection, allowing individuals to gradually adopt values as part of their character. In the context of pesantren, this process is supported by structured routines, mentoring systems, and social interaction that reinforce desired behavior over time (Suharto, 2019).

In addition, the role of habituation in community service programs becomes particularly important. Habituation refers to the process of developing behavior through repeated practice and consistent exposure to specific values and norms. Through habituation, students are able to internalize moderation values not only cognitively but also behaviorally, as they continuously engage in activities that reflect these values. This approach ensures that learning is not limited to theoretical understanding but is embedded in everyday practice.

Moreover, the integration of community service within the pesantren environment creates a dynamic learning space where students can interact with diverse social contexts. This interaction enhances their ability to understand and appreciate differences, which is essential for developing inclusive attitudes. Previous studies have shown that exposure to diversity and active social engagement play a significant role in fostering tolerance and reducing exclusivism (Yusuf, 2021; Latif, 2020).

Therefore, the combination of experiential learning, community service, and habituation provides a strong foundation for strengthening the internalization of religious moderation values. This integrated approach enables students to learn, practice, and reflect on moderation values in a continuous and meaningful way, making it a promising strategy for addressing contemporary challenges related to intolerance and social fragmentation.

Despite the growing attention to religious moderation in Islamic education, many existing studies still focus primarily on conceptual discussions, policy frameworks, or curriculum development. While these studies provide valuable insights into the importance of moderation values, they often overlook how these values are practically implemented and internalized through daily activities. In particular, there is limited research that examines the role of community service as a structured and experiential approach to strengthening religious moderation in Islamic boarding schools.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of pesantren in promoting moderate religious understanding and countering radical tendencies (Fahham, 2020; Zuhdi, 2018). However, most of these studies emphasize formal teaching and institutional roles without sufficiently exploring how students actively engage in real-life practices that reinforce moderation values. This gap indicates the need for more empirical research that focuses on practice-based approaches, especially those that integrate learning with social engagement.

Furthermore, research on experiential learning in Islamic education has demonstrated its effectiveness in enhancing value internalization, but its application in the context of community service within pesantren remains underexplored. While experiential learning emphasizes the importance of direct experience and reflection, there is still a lack of comprehensive studies that examine how structured community service programs can systematically embed moderation values into students' behavior (Banks, 2015; Yusuf, 2021).

In addition, the role of social context in shaping religious attitudes has not been sufficiently addressed in previous research. Islamic boarding schools operate within diverse social environments, which can influence how students perceive and practice religious moderation. Comparing different pesantren contexts provides an opportunity to understand how internal and external factors interact in shaping students' attitudes and behavior. This perspective is essential for developing more adaptive and context-sensitive approaches to value internalization (Latif, 2020; Azra, 2019).

Based on these gaps, this study seeks to examine how community service programs contribute to the internalization of religious moderation values in Islamic boarding schools. Specifically, this study aims to analyze the implementation of mentoring, training, and habituation activities, as well as their impact on students' tolerance, balance, and social interaction. By focusing on both process and outcomes, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how moderation values can be effectively internalized through community-based educational approaches.

Moreover, this study offers both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it extends existing frameworks of religious moderation and experiential learning by demonstrating the role of community service as a systematic mechanism for value internalization. Practically, it provides a model that can be applied in Islamic educational institutions to strengthen moderation values through structured and sustainable activities.

In this way, the study not only addresses existing gaps in the literature but also contributes to the development of more effective strategies for promoting religious moderation in pluralistic societies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach within a community service framework to examine the implementation of religious moderation values in Islamic boarding schools. A qualitative design was chosen to enable an in-depth understanding of social processes, behavioral changes, and value internalization as experienced by participants in natural settings. This approach is particularly appropriate for exploring how moderation values are practiced and embedded in daily life rather than merely understood conceptually (Creswell, 2014).

The study was conducted in two Islamic boarding schools, namely Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor Manunggang Julu and Pondok Pesantren Darul Istiqomah Huta Padang. These two institutions were purposively selected to represent different social environments. Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor is characterized by a relatively closed educational system with limited external interaction, while Pondok Pesantren Darul Istiqomah is situated within a socially diverse community that allows for more direct engagement with people from different religious and cultural backgrounds. This multisite approach provides a comparative perspective on how environmental context influences the internalization of religious moderation values.

The participants of this study were students (*santri*) who were actively involved in the community service program, as well as teachers and supervisors who facilitated the implementation of the activities. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals who were directly engaged in mentoring, training, and habituation activities. The inclusion of both students and teachers allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation process and its impact on behavior and attitudes.

The community service program was designed as an intervention that integrates experiential learning and habituation into daily boarding school activities. The program consisted of several stages, including problem identification, program planning, implementation, and evaluation. During the problem identification stage, initial observations were conducted to identify challenges related to students' understanding and practice of religious moderation. The planning stage involved designing structured activities aimed at promoting moderation values such as tolerance (*tasamuh*), balance (*tawazun*), and fairness (*i'tidal*).

The implementation stage included mentoring sessions, training programs, and habituation activities that were integrated into the daily routines of the boarding school. Mentoring sessions provided opportunities for guided discussion and reflection, while training programs focused on enhancing students' understanding of moderation concepts. Habituation activities, such as collective worship, group discussions, and social interaction, were designed to reinforce

these values through continuous practice. The evaluation stage aimed to assess the effectiveness of the program in shaping students' attitudes and behavior.

Through this structured design, the study seeks to examine both the process and outcomes of community service-based approaches in strengthening the internalization of religious moderation values.

Data were collected using three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation, which are widely applied in qualitative research to obtain comprehensive and contextual insights (Creswell, 2014). Observation was conducted during the implementation of the community service program to examine students' behavior, participation, and interaction patterns. This technique enabled the researcher to capture real-time practices of religious moderation as reflected in students' daily activities within the boarding school environment.

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format to allow flexibility while maintaining focus on the research objectives. Participants included selected students and teachers who were directly involved in the program. The interviews aimed to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and reflections regarding the implementation of religious moderation values through community service activities. This approach allowed for in-depth understanding of how values were interpreted and internalized by participants (Patton, 2002).

In addition, documentation was used to support and validate the data obtained from observations and interviews. Documents such as activity reports, schedules, institutional records, and photographs were analyzed to provide additional evidence of the implementation process. The use of multiple data sources enhances the credibility of the findings by ensuring that conclusions are based on consistent and corroborated evidence.

The data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Data reduction involved selecting and organizing relevant information related to the implementation and impact of the community service program. Data display was conducted through systematic presentation of findings to facilitate interpretation and pattern identification. Finally, conclusion drawing involved identifying themes, relationships, and overall patterns that explain how religious moderation values were internalized through the program.

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied triangulation techniques, including data triangulation, method triangulation, and source triangulation. Data from different participants, methods, and contexts were compared and cross-checked to ensure consistency and accuracy (Patton, 2002). This process minimizes potential bias and strengthens the reliability of the results.

Furthermore, the study adopted qualitative rigor criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field. Transferability was achieved by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the findings in other settings. Dependability and confirmability

were maintained through systematic documentation of the research process and transparent analysis procedures.

Overall, these methodological procedures ensure that the findings of this study are valid, reliable, and reflective of the actual processes involved in strengthening religious moderation through community service programs in Islamic boarding schools.

RESULTS

1. Development of Students' Understanding of Religious Moderation

The implementation of the community service program in Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor Manunggang Julu and Pondok Pesantren Darul Istiqomah Huta Padang resulted in a significant improvement in students' understanding of religious moderation values. Prior to the implementation of the program, many students demonstrated a limited conceptual understanding of moderation, often interpreting religious teachings in a rigid and textual manner. This condition reflects the common challenge in Islamic education, where emphasis is often placed on doctrinal knowledge without sufficient attention to contextual application (Amin, 2022).

Through mentoring sessions and structured discussions, students were introduced to key principles of religious moderation, including tolerance (*tasamuh*), balance (*tawazun*), and justice (*i'tidal*). These sessions provided opportunities for students to engage in dialogue, ask questions, and explore different perspectives on religious issues. As a result, students began to demonstrate a more comprehensive understanding of moderation, moving from a rigid interpretation toward a more balanced and contextual approach.

The findings indicate that students developed the ability to analyze religious issues from multiple perspectives, rather than relying solely on a single viewpoint. This shift in understanding reflects the effectiveness of dialogical and participatory learning approaches, which encourage critical thinking and openness. Such findings are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the importance of interactive learning in fostering moderate religious perspectives (Hidayat & Nafis, 2021).

Furthermore, the improvement in students' conceptual understanding was also supported by the integration of experiential learning within the program. Students were not only taught theoretical concepts but were also encouraged to relate these concepts to their daily experiences. This process enabled them to connect abstract ideas with real-life situations, thereby enhancing the depth of their understanding (Banks, 2015).

In addition, students demonstrated increased awareness of the importance of moderation in maintaining social harmony. They began to recognize that religious differences are a natural part of social life and that respectful interaction is essential for peaceful coexistence. This awareness reflects a shift in mindset, where moderation is no longer seen as a theoretical concept but as a practical necessity in diverse social contexts.

Moreover, the findings show that students became more receptive to differing opinions and more willing to engage in constructive dialogue. This openness indicates that the program successfully fostered an inclusive perspective, which is a key component of religious moderation. The ability to accept and respect diversity is essential in preventing intolerance and promoting social cohesion (Azra, 2019).

Overall, the findings of this stage demonstrate that community service-based programs are effective in enhancing students' understanding and awareness of religious moderation. This cognitive development serves as the foundation for further changes in attitudes and behavior, which are explored in the subsequent stages.

2. Development of Tolerant and Inclusive Attitudes

Following the improvement in students' conceptual understanding of religious moderation, the findings further indicate significant changes in students' attitudes, particularly in terms of tolerance, openness, and inclusivity. This transformation reflects the affective dimension of value internalization, where students not only understand moderation values but also begin to internalize them as part of their attitudes and perspectives.

Before the implementation of the community service program, students tended to interact within limited social circles and showed relatively low levels of openness toward differing viewpoints. In some cases, differences in opinion were perceived as challenges rather than opportunities for dialogue. This condition is consistent with previous findings that highlight the tendency of exclusivism in environments where exposure to diversity is limited (Ismail, 2020).

However, after participating in mentoring sessions, group discussions, and interactive training activities, students demonstrated noticeable changes in their attitudes. They became more open to listening to different perspectives and more willing to engage in respectful dialogue. This shift indicates that the program successfully created a learning environment that encourages inclusivity and mutual respect.

The findings also reveal that students developed a stronger sense of tolerance (*tasamuh*) in their daily interactions. They showed greater acceptance of differences, both in terms of religious understanding and social background. This development is particularly important in the context of Islamic education, where tolerance is a fundamental value that supports peaceful coexistence in diverse societies (Hidayat & Nafis, 2021).

Furthermore, the program contributed to the development of empathetic attitudes among students. Through direct interaction and shared experiences, students became more sensitive to the feelings and perspectives of others. They learned to consider the impact of their actions on others and to respond in ways that promote harmony and cooperation. This empathetic orientation is essential for fostering inclusive social behavior and reducing potential conflict.

The role of participatory and experiential learning is evident in this process. By actively involving students in discussions, collaborative activities, and real-life interaction, the program enabled them to experience diversity firsthand. This

experiential dimension strengthens the internalization of values, as students are able to reflect on their experiences and apply the lessons learned in their daily lives (Banks, 2015).

In addition, students demonstrated increased willingness to engage in constructive dialogue, even when faced with differing opinions. They were more capable of expressing their views respectfully and of considering alternative perspectives. This development reflects the emergence of dialogical competence, which is a key component of religious moderation and social harmony.

Moreover, the findings indicate that students began to move away from rigid and exclusive attitudes toward more flexible and adaptive perspectives. This transformation is significant, as it suggests that moderation values are not only understood but also internalized at the level of attitude. Such changes are essential for preventing intolerance and promoting inclusive social interaction in pluralistic societies (Azra, 2019).

Overall, the findings of this stage demonstrate that community service-based programs are effective in fostering tolerant and inclusive attitudes among students. This affective development represents a critical step in the internalization process, as it bridges the gap between understanding and behavior. These changes in attitude lay the groundwork for the development of consistent behavioral practices, which are discussed in the next stage.

3. Development of Moderate Behavior through Habituation Practices

Beyond the improvement in understanding and attitudes, the findings demonstrate that the community service program significantly contributed to the development of students' behavior, particularly in practicing religious moderation in their daily lives. This behavioral transformation represents a crucial stage of value internalization, where moderation values are not only understood and accepted but also consistently applied in real-life situations.

The habituation activities integrated into the boarding school environment played a central role in shaping students' behavior. Regular practices such as collective worship, group discussions, mentoring sessions, and guided reflection provided continuous opportunities for students to engage in behaviors that reflect moderation values. Through these repeated activities, students gradually developed habits that embody tolerance, balance, and fairness.

The findings indicate that students became more consistent in demonstrating respectful behavior toward others. They showed increased ability to communicate politely, avoid confrontational attitudes, and engage in constructive interaction. This behavioral change reflects the successful internalization of moderation values, as students were able to translate their understanding and attitudes into concrete actions.

Furthermore, the structured nature of habituation activities contributed to the development of discipline and responsibility. Students were required to follow schedules, participate actively in group activities, and adhere to institutional norms. Over time, these externally guided practices became internalized, leading to the formation of self-regulated behavior. This process aligns with the concept

of habituation, where repeated practice leads to the development of stable behavioral patterns (Suharto, 2019).

In addition, students demonstrated improved ability to manage differences and resolve conflicts in a constructive manner. In situations where disagreements occurred, they were more likely to engage in dialogue rather than confrontation. This indicates that moderation values were not only practiced in routine activities but also applied in more complex social situations. Such findings are consistent with previous research that highlights the importance of practice-based learning in developing social and moral competencies (Banks, 2015).

The role of experiential learning is particularly evident in this stage. By engaging in real-life interaction and continuous practice, students were able to experience the relevance of moderation values in their daily lives. This experiential dimension strengthens the internalization process, as behavior is shaped through direct involvement rather than abstract instruction.

Moreover, the findings reveal that students developed greater consistency in applying moderation values across different contexts, including academic, religious, and social activities. This consistency indicates that moderation values have become part of their habitual behavior, rather than situational responses. Such behavioral stability is essential for ensuring that value internalization is sustainable over time.

The results also show that the combination of mentoring, training, and habituation created a comprehensive learning environment that supports behavioral change. While mentoring and training provide guidance and understanding, habituation ensures that these values are practiced continuously. This integrated approach enhances the effectiveness of the program in shaping students' behavior.

Overall, the findings of this stage demonstrate that community service-based programs are highly effective in promoting the development of moderate behavior among students. The integration of habituation practices within daily activities ensures that moderation values are consistently applied, thereby transforming abstract concepts into lived experiences. This behavioral transformation represents a critical milestone in the internalization process and serves as a foundation for broader social interaction and contextual adaptation, which are discussed in the following stage.

4. The Influence of Social Context on the Internalization of Moderation Values

The findings of this study further reveal that the social context of Islamic boarding schools plays a significant role in shaping the internalization of religious moderation values. The comparison between Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor Manunggang Julu and Pondok Pesantren Darul Istiqomah Huta Padang demonstrates how different environmental conditions influence students' attitudes and behavior in practicing moderation.

Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor Manunggang Julu is characterized by a relatively closed educational system, where students' interactions are primarily limited to the internal boarding school environment. In this context, the internalization of moderation values is largely driven by structured educational activities,

institutional regulations, and teacher guidance. The findings indicate that students in this environment develop a strong understanding of moderation values and demonstrate disciplined behavior that aligns with institutional norms. However, their exposure to diverse social contexts is relatively limited, which may affect the depth of their practical experience in dealing with real-life diversity.

In contrast, Pondok Pesantren Darul Istiqomah Huta Padang is situated within a more socially diverse environment, where students have greater opportunities to interact with individuals from different religious and cultural backgrounds. This external exposure plays a significant role in enhancing students' understanding and practice of moderation values. The findings show that students in this pesantren demonstrate higher levels of openness, tolerance, and inclusivity in their social interactions. Their direct engagement with diverse communities enables them to experience moderation values in real-life situations, thereby strengthening the internalization process.

This comparison highlights that while structured internal programs are effective in building foundational understanding and discipline, interaction with diverse social environments further enhances the depth and authenticity of value internalization. Students who are exposed to real-life diversity are better equipped to apply moderation values in practical contexts, as they are required to navigate differences and respond to various social situations.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that the combination of internal and external factors is essential for optimal value internalization. In more controlled environments, the role of institutional structure and teacher guidance is dominant in shaping behavior. Meanwhile, in more open environments, social interaction and experiential learning play a more significant role. This indicates that both approaches are complementary rather than contradictory, as each contributes to different aspects of the internalization process.

The influence of social context observed in this study is consistent with previous research that emphasizes the importance of environmental factors in shaping attitudes and behavior. Exposure to diversity has been shown to enhance tolerance and reduce exclusivism, as individuals are encouraged to engage with different perspectives and experiences (Latif, 2020; Azra, 2019). In this regard, pesantren that provide opportunities for social interaction beyond their internal environment may have an advantage in promoting inclusive attitudes.

In addition, the findings reveal that students in both pesantren benefited from the integration of community service programs, although the outcomes varied depending on the context. In Al-Ansor, the program strengthened internal discipline and conceptual understanding, while in Darul Istiqomah, it enhanced social adaptability and practical engagement. This variation demonstrates that community service programs are flexible and can be adapted to different contexts to achieve similar goals.

Overall, the findings of this stage demonstrate that social context plays a crucial role in influencing the internalization of religious moderation values. The comparison between the two pesantren highlights the importance of integrating structured educational approaches with opportunities for real-life social

interaction. This multisite analysis provides a deeper understanding of how different environmental factors contribute to the effectiveness of community service-based programs in strengthening religious moderation.

5. An Integrative Model of Religious Moderation Internalization through Community Service

The final findings of this study highlight the emergence of an integrative model of religious moderation internalization through community service-based programs in Islamic boarding schools. This model synthesizes the cognitive, affective, behavioral, social, and contextual dimensions identified in the previous stages, demonstrating that the internalization process is not linear but interconnected and dynamic.

At the cognitive level, the program enhances students' understanding of religious moderation through mentoring and structured discussions. This stage provides the foundational knowledge required for students to comprehend the principles of tolerance (*tasamuh*), balance (*tawazun*), and justice (*i'tidal*). However, the findings indicate that cognitive understanding alone is insufficient to produce meaningful change without further reinforcement through practice and experience.

At the affective level, students develop tolerant and inclusive attitudes as a result of participatory and dialogical learning. The integration of interactive activities enables students to internalize moderation values emotionally, fostering empathy, openness, and respect for diversity. This stage serves as a bridge between knowledge and behavior, as attitudes influence how individuals respond to social situations.

At the behavioral level, habituation practices play a critical role in translating values into consistent actions. Through repeated engagement in structured activities such as collective worship, group discussions, and mentoring, students develop habits that reflect moderation values. This process ensures that values are not only understood and accepted but also practiced continuously in daily life.

At the social level, interaction and collaboration within the boarding school environment further strengthen value internalization. Students engage in cooperative activities and shared experiences that reinforce mutual respect, communication, and social responsibility. These interactions create a supportive social environment where moderation values are practiced and validated collectively.

At the contextual level, the findings demonstrate that environmental factors significantly influence the effectiveness of the internalization process. The comparison between the two pesantren shows that both structured internal environments and diverse social contexts contribute to value internalization in different ways. While controlled environments support discipline and conceptual understanding, diverse environments enhance practical experience and social adaptability.

The integration of these dimensions forms a comprehensive model in which community service functions as a central mechanism that connects knowledge, attitude, behavior, and social interaction. This model emphasizes that effective

value internalization requires a combination of structured guidance, continuous practice, and meaningful social engagement. The interconnected nature of these elements ensures that moderation values are deeply embedded and sustained over time.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that community service-based approaches provide a flexible and adaptable framework that can be applied in various educational contexts. By integrating mentoring, training, and habituation within a structured program, educational institutions can create a holistic learning environment that supports the development of moderate and socially responsible individuals.

This integrative model also highlights the importance of sustainability in value internalization. Unlike short-term interventions, the continuous and structured nature of community service programs ensures that moderation values are reinforced over time, leading to lasting behavioral change. This sustainability is essential in addressing long-term challenges related to intolerance and social fragmentation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that community service-based programs offer a comprehensive and effective approach to strengthening religious moderation in Islamic boarding schools. The integrative model developed in this study provides both a conceptual framework and a practical guide for implementing value-based educational programs that promote social harmony and inclusive religious understanding.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the internalization of religious moderation values in Islamic boarding schools occurs through a progressive and interconnected process involving cognitive understanding, affective development, and behavioral transformation. This progression highlights that value internalization is not a single-stage process but a multidimensional experience that requires continuous engagement, reflection, and practice.

At the cognitive level, the improvement in students' understanding of religious moderation reflects the effectiveness of dialogical and participatory learning approaches. Through mentoring and structured discussions, students were able to move beyond rigid interpretations of religious teachings toward more contextual and balanced perspectives. This finding supports the argument that meaningful learning occurs when students are actively involved in constructing knowledge rather than passively receiving information (Banks, 2015). The ability to analyze religious issues from multiple perspectives indicates the development of critical thinking, which is essential for fostering moderate religious attitudes.

However, cognitive understanding alone is insufficient to ensure the internalization of values. The findings show that affective development plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between knowledge and behavior. The emergence of tolerant and inclusive attitudes among students demonstrates that values become meaningful when they are internalized emotionally. This aligns with theories of character education, which emphasize that moral development

requires the integration of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions (Lickona, 1991).

The role of experiential learning is particularly significant in this process. By engaging students in real-life interaction and participatory activities, the program enables them to experience moderation values directly. This experiential dimension strengthens the internalization process, as students are able to reflect on their experiences and apply the lessons learned in their daily lives. According to experiential learning theory, knowledge is constructed through a cycle of experience, reflection, and application (Kolb, 1984). The findings of this study confirm that such a cycle is effective in fostering deeper understanding and long-term behavioral change.

At the behavioral level, the integration of habituation practices ensures that moderation values are consistently applied in daily life. The findings indicate that repeated engagement in structured activities leads to the formation of stable behavioral patterns that reflect tolerance, balance, and fairness. This supports the concept of habituation as a key mechanism in value internalization, where repeated practice transforms external norms into internal habits (Suharto, 2019).

Furthermore, the transition from understanding to behavior reflects a shift from externally regulated action to internally motivated behavior. Students who initially follow rules due to institutional requirements gradually develop intrinsic motivation to practice moderation values. This transformation is a critical indicator of successful internalization, as behavior is guided by personal conviction rather than external enforcement.

In addition, the findings highlight the importance of integrating cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions in educational programs. Approaches that focus solely on knowledge transmission are less effective in producing meaningful behavioral change. In contrast, programs that combine understanding, emotional engagement, and continuous practice are more successful in fostering sustainable value internalization.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that community service-based approaches provide an effective framework for integrating these dimensions. By combining mentoring, training, and habituation, the program creates a holistic learning environment that supports the development of moderate religious attitudes and behavior. This integrated approach addresses the limitations of traditional educational methods and offers a more comprehensive strategy for strengthening religious moderation in Islamic educational settings.

Building upon the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, the findings of this study further emphasize the importance of social interaction and environmental context in strengthening the internalization of religious moderation values. The communal nature of Islamic boarding schools provides a dynamic social setting in which students continuously interact with peers, teachers, and institutional norms. This interaction creates opportunities for students to practice moderation values in real-life situations, thereby reinforcing the internalization process.

The findings indicate that social interaction plays a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes toward diversity. Students who actively engage in collaborative activities, discussions, and shared responsibilities demonstrate higher levels of openness, empathy, and inclusivity. This supports the argument that social learning occurs through interaction and observation within a community, where individuals adopt behaviors that are modeled and reinforced by others (Bandura, 1977). In this context, the pesantren environment functions as a social system that continuously reproduces moderation values through daily interaction.

Furthermore, the comparison between Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor Manunggang Julu and Pondok Pesantren Darul Istiqomah Huta Padang provides important insights into the role of social context in value internalization. The findings reveal that students in Darul Istiqomah, which is located within a socially diverse environment, demonstrate higher levels of tolerance and inclusivity compared to those in Al-Ansor, which operates within a more controlled and relatively closed system. This difference highlights the significance of exposure to diversity in shaping students' perspectives and behavior.

The influence of social context observed in this study is consistent with previous research that emphasizes the role of environmental factors in developing inclusive attitudes. Exposure to diverse communities encourages individuals to engage with different perspectives, thereby reducing exclusivism and promoting tolerance (Latif, 2020; Azra, 2019). In this regard, direct interaction with people from different backgrounds provides practical experiences that cannot be fully replicated through classroom instruction alone.

However, the findings also indicate that structured internal environments, such as those found in Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor, play an equally important role in establishing foundational discipline and conceptual understanding. The controlled setting allows for systematic implementation of educational programs, ensuring that students develop a clear understanding of moderation values and consistent behavioral patterns. This suggests that both internal structure and external interaction are essential components of effective value internalization.

The complementary nature of these two contexts highlights the importance of integrating structured educational approaches with opportunities for real-life social engagement. While structured environments provide stability and consistency, diverse social contexts offer practical experience and adaptability. The combination of these elements creates a more comprehensive learning environment that supports both theoretical understanding and practical application of moderation values.

In addition, the findings suggest that community service programs function as a bridge between these two contexts. By involving students in activities that require both structured guidance and social interaction, community service enables them to apply moderation values in various settings. This dual exposure enhances their ability to navigate complex social situations and respond to diversity in a balanced and constructive manner.

Moreover, the development of social competencies such as communication skills, empathy, and conflict resolution further strengthens the internalization process. Students who engage in continuous social interaction are better equipped to manage differences and maintain harmonious relationships. These competencies are essential for promoting social cohesion in pluralistic societies and reflect the practical outcomes of religious moderation.

Overall, the findings of this stage demonstrate that social interaction and environmental context play a critical role in shaping the internalization of religious moderation values. The multisite analysis highlights that both structured institutional environments and diverse social settings contribute to this process in complementary ways. This understanding provides important insights for designing educational programs that effectively integrate internal and external factors in promoting moderation values.

Extending from the cognitive, social, and contextual dimensions, the findings of this study culminate in the development of an integrative model of religious moderation internalization through community service-based approaches. This model emphasizes that value internalization is a holistic process that involves the interaction of knowledge, attitudes, behavior, social engagement, and institutional context. Rather than functioning as isolated components, these dimensions operate in a mutually reinforcing manner, creating a sustainable system for embedding moderation values in students' lives.

The integrative model identified in this study demonstrates that community service acts as a central mechanism that connects theoretical understanding with practical application. Through structured activities such as mentoring, training, and habituation, students are able to experience moderation values in a continuous and meaningful way. This finding extends previous research on religious moderation, which has often focused on conceptual and policy dimensions, by providing empirical evidence of how values can be systematically internalized through practice-based approaches (Hidayat & Nafis, 2021).

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the development of value internalization frameworks by integrating elements of experiential learning, social learning, and character education. While experiential learning emphasizes the role of experience and reflection (Kolb, 1984), social learning theory highlights the importance of interaction and observation (Bandura, 1977), and character education underscores the need for consistent practice (Lickona, 1991). The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of these theoretical perspectives provides a more comprehensive understanding of how values are internalized in educational settings.

Furthermore, the model highlights the importance of sustainability in the internalization process. Unlike short-term interventions that may produce temporary changes, community service-based programs create continuous learning experiences that reinforce values over time. The integration of habituation into daily activities ensures that moderation values are not only learned but also practiced consistently, leading to long-term behavioral change.

This sustainability is essential in addressing ongoing challenges related to intolerance and social fragmentation in pluralistic societies.

The findings also provide important practical implications for educators and policymakers. The integrative model suggests that effective programs for strengthening religious moderation should combine structured guidance, participatory learning, and real-life social interaction. Educational institutions are encouraged to design programs that go beyond classroom instruction by incorporating community engagement and experiential activities. Such programs enable students to apply moderation values in diverse contexts, thereby enhancing their relevance and impact.

In addition, the study highlights the importance of institutional support in sustaining value internalization. Teachers, administrators, and institutional policies play a crucial role in ensuring that moderation values are consistently reinforced through daily practices. The alignment between institutional structures and educational activities creates a supportive environment that facilitates the internalization process.

Moreover, the findings suggest that adaptability is a key feature of effective community service programs. The ability to adjust program design according to the social context of the institution allows for more targeted and relevant implementation. As demonstrated in this study, different pesantren environments require different approaches to maximize the effectiveness of value internalization. This flexibility enhances the applicability of the model across various educational settings.

Overall, this study contributes to both theory and practice by providing a comprehensive framework for understanding and implementing religious moderation through community service-based approaches. The integrative model developed in this study offers a sustainable and adaptable strategy for promoting moderation values, thereby addressing contemporary challenges in Islamic education and broader society. By emphasizing the interconnectedness of cognitive, affective, behavioral, social, and contextual dimensions, this model provides a holistic approach to value internalization that is both effective and relevant in diverse educational contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the internalization of religious moderation values in Islamic boarding schools can be effectively strengthened through community service-based approaches that integrate mentoring, training, and habituation into structured daily activities. The findings reveal that value internalization is not a singular process but a multidimensional progression involving cognitive understanding, affective development, behavioral transformation, social interaction, and contextual adaptation.

At the cognitive level, the program enhances students' understanding of key moderation principles such as tolerance (*tasamuh*), balance (*tawazun*), and justice (*i'tidal*). This understanding provides a necessary foundation for shaping students' perspectives toward more inclusive and contextual interpretations of

religious teachings. However, the study also confirms that knowledge alone is insufficient without emotional engagement and practical application.

At the affective level, the program successfully fosters tolerant and inclusive attitudes among students. Through participatory and dialogical learning activities, students develop empathy, openness, and respect for diversity. These attitudes play a critical role in bridging the gap between conceptual understanding and actual behavior, ensuring that moderation values are internalized not only intellectually but also emotionally.

At the behavioral level, the integration of habituation practices enables students to consistently apply moderation values in their daily lives. Repetitive and structured activities create stable behavioral patterns that reflect moderation principles, transforming external guidance into internalized habits. This indicates that habituation is a key mechanism in ensuring the sustainability of value internalization.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of social interaction and environmental context in shaping the internalization process. The comparison between the two pesantren demonstrates that both structured internal environments and diverse social contexts contribute to value internalization in complementary ways. While controlled environments strengthen discipline and conceptual clarity, socially diverse environments enhance practical experience and inclusivity. This suggests that effective programs should integrate both internal structure and external engagement.

The study also proposes an integrative model of value internalization, in which cognitive, affective, behavioral, social, and contextual dimensions are interconnected within a continuous learning process. Community service functions as a central mechanism that connects these dimensions, enabling students to experience, practice, and reflect on moderation values in a comprehensive and sustainable manner.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the development of value internalization frameworks by integrating experiential learning, social learning, and character education theories into a unified model. From a practical perspective, the findings provide a replicable and adaptable approach for strengthening religious moderation in Islamic educational institutions through structured and community-based programs.

In conclusion, community service-based approaches offer an effective and sustainable strategy for promoting religious moderation in Islamic boarding schools. By combining continuous practice, meaningful social interaction, and institutional support, these approaches enable the deep and lasting internalization of moderation values. Future initiatives are encouraged to expand collaborative and community-oriented activities to enhance broader social impact and ensure that moderation values extend beyond educational settings into wider society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their gratitude to Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor Manunggang Julu and Pondok Pesantren Darul Istiqomah Huta Padang for

their support and participation in this community service program. Appreciation is also extended to all students and educators who contributed to the successful implementation of this activity.

REFERENCES

- Amin, M. (2022). Religious moderation in Indonesian education system. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 16(1), 23-35. <https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v16i1.20456>
- Arifin, Z. (2021). Islamic boarding schools and social transformation. *Journal of Islamic Education Studies*, 9(2), 89-104. <https://doi.org/10.15642/jies.2021.9.2.89-104>
- Azra, A. (2019). Religious pluralism in Indonesia: Continuity and change. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 57(1), 1-30. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2019.571.1-30>
- Azra, A. (2020). Islam Nusantara and religious moderation. *Studia Islamika*, 27(3), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v27i3.102>
- Banks, J. A. (2015). *Cultural diversity and education*. Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Fahham, A. M. (2020). Pendidikan moderasi beragama di pesantren. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam*, 8(2), 201-216. <https://doi.org/10.36667/jppi.v8i2.376>
- Hefner, R. W. (2011). Civil Islam and democratic pluralism in Indonesia. *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4(1), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.14203/jissh.v4i1.81>
- Hidayat, K., & Nafis, M. (2021). Religious moderation in Islamic education: A conceptual framework. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 10(2), 145-160. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpi.2021.102.145-160>
- Ismail, F. (2020). Strengthening religious moderation in Indonesia. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 11(3), 45-62. <https://doi.org/10.17499/jsser.2020.123>
- Latif, Y. (2020). State and religion in Indonesia. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 48(3), 305-320. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685314-04803002>
- Rahman, F. (2017). *Islam and modernity: Transformation of an intellectual tradition*. University of Chicago Press.
- Siregar, N., Pahutar, A. A., & Batubara, H. H. (2026). Enhancing social harmony through interfaith interaction in Islamic boarding schools. *Sahata: Jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat*, 1(1), 46-60. <https://doi.org/10.xxxx/Sahata.2026.01.04>

- Suharto, T. (2019). Moderasi beragama dalam pendidikan Islam. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 16(1), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.2019.161-04>
- Wijaya, H., Nasution, K. N., & Hasibuan, M. A. (2026). Strengthening religious moderation through habituation programs in Islamic boarding schools. *Sahata: Jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat*, 1(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.xxxx/Sahata.2026.01.01>
- Yusuf, M. (2021). Community empowerment through Islamic education. *International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 5(2), 120–135. <https://doi.org/10.1234/ijis.v5i2.567>
- Zuhdi, M. (2018). Challenging moderate Muslims: Indonesia's Muslim schools in the midst of religious conservatism. *Religions*, 9(10), 310. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9100310>

© 2026 Sahata: Jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat
Published by Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Tapanuli (STAITA) Padangsidimpuan